

THE DIOCESE OF THE WINDWARD ISLANDS

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The Rt. Rev'd C. Leopold Friday, B.A., M.A.

Bishop's Christmas Message 2022

As a Diocese, we celebrate the birth of Christ amid several challenges as we journey on through the COVID-19 Pandemic, the explosive eruptions of the La Soufriere Volcano, hurricanes, storms, increase in the cost of oil and other commodities, high homicide rates in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia, unemployment, and other issues.

At times the future may seem very dim, dark, and hopeless. Yet in our midst, young people and those of a more mature age are making their mark. There are still outstanding results in the CSEC, CAPE, and University Examinations. Some continue to graduate in the different disciplines of human endeavour – Medical and Social Sciences, the Arts, Education, Theology, Economics, Information Technology, Tourism, Hospitality, Agriculture, Music, the Creative Arts, Sports, Culture, and the list goes on. Carpenters, masons, farmers, vendors and fisherfolk continue to ply their trade. They all contribute rightfully to developing the nations that make up the Diocese and beyond.

Through it, all individuals, groups, organisations, the public and private sectors and Churches make it their duty to care for the less fortunate, poor and sick, prisoners, and the most affected by public health emergencies, natural disasters, crime, and violence throughout the Diocese and beyond. Some have had humble beginnings, and there were times when parents could not afford to provide quality education for all their needs. Then a family member, neighbour, person in the community, stranger, organization, public and private sector, and the Church assisted, transforming their lives forever. Now they and their family have a more meaningful existence. There are also efforts to put structures in place to ensure that more persons have the opportunity to achieve a better quality of life.

In Matthew 1: 18-23, we read:

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to

be with child from the Holy Spirit.

19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

Christmas reminds us that God is with us through all the changing scenes of life; whatever we are going through, God is there with us and never leaves or forsakes us. Even through the dark shadows of the night, the moments of our greatest fears, struggles, sorrows, and pain. God did not spare his Son, remember while he hung on the cross those who derided him saying:

40 "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Matthew 27: 40.

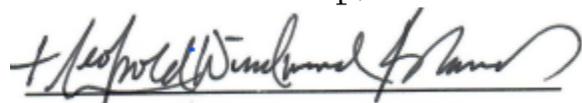
Christmas speaks of the love of God for us and the world, as John the gospel writer states:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3: 16)

As we journey through these challenging times and generally throughout our lives, my brothers and sisters in Christ, Christmas reminds us and assures us that God is with us. Emmanuel!

I take this opportunity on behalf of my wife Lois, three daughters Marcella, Malaika and Mikayla to wish you a Blessed Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

Your friend and Bishop,



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